



Republicans reject Rep. Jim Jordan for House speaker on a first ballot

By LISA MASCARO, FARNOUSH AMIRI and
STEPHEN GROVES

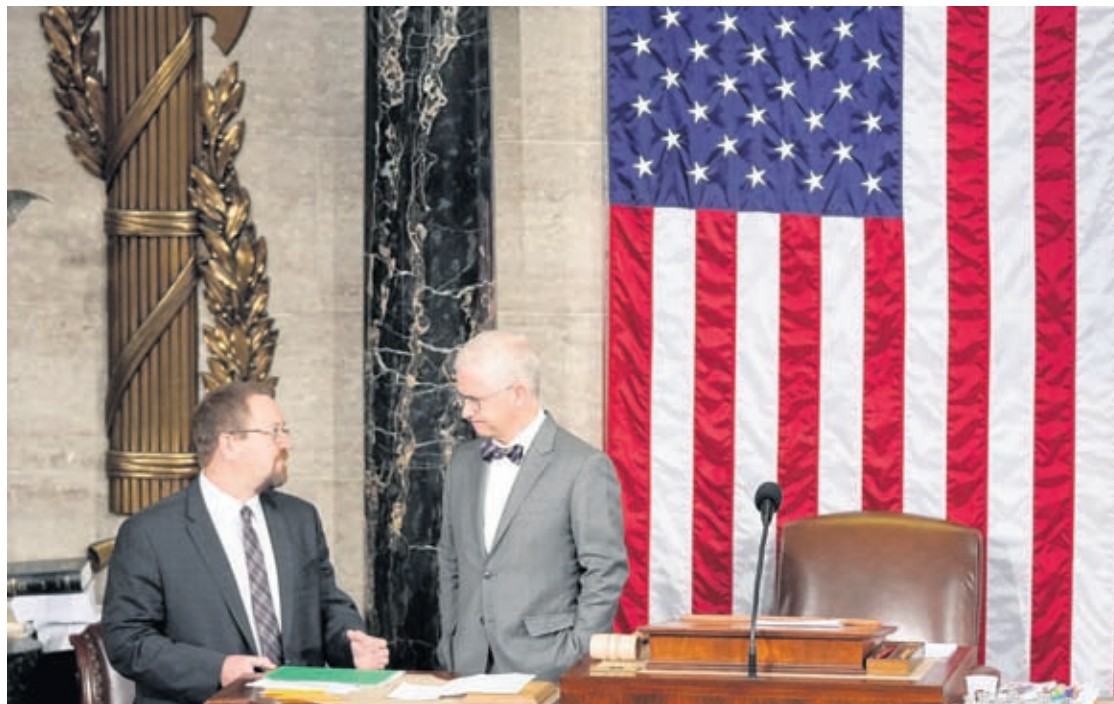
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — More turmoil ahead, Republicans rejected Rep. Jim Jordan for House speaker on a first ballot Tuesday, as an unexpectedly numerous 20 holdouts denied the hard-charging ally of Donald Trump the GOP majority needed to seize the gavel.

Additional voting was postponed as the House hit a standstill, stuck while Jordan works to shore up support from Republican colleagues to replace the ousted Kevin McCarthy for the job. Reluctant Republicans are refusing to give Jordan their votes, viewing the Ohio congressman as too extreme for the powerful position of House speaker, second in line to the presidency. Next votes were expected Wednesday.

"We're going to keep working," Jordan said at the Capitol as evening fell.

It's been two weeks of angry Republican infighting since McCarthy's sudden removal by hard-liners, who are now within reach of a central seat of U.S. power. The vote for House speaker, once a formality in Congress, has devolved into another bitter showdown for the gavel.



Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., temporary House leader, right, arrives on the House floor as Republicans try to elect Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, a top Donald Trump ally, to be the new House speaker, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, Oct. 17, 2023.

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Republicans reject Rep. Jim Jordan for House speaker on a first ballot

Continued from Front

Jordan said after the first vote that he was not surprised and expected to do better in the next round. But the afternoon dragged on with no further votes Tuesday.

"We feel confident," he said, ducking into a leadership office. "We've already talked to some members who are going to vote with us on the second ballot."

The tally, with 200 Republicans voting for Jordan and 212 for the Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York, left no candidate with a clear majority, as 20 Republicans voted for someone else. With Republicans in majority control, Jordan must pick up most of his GOP foes to win.

The holdouts are a mix of pragmatists, ranging from seasoned legislators and committee chairs worried about governing to newer lawmakers from districts where voters back home prefer President Joe Biden to Trump.

But with public pressure bearing down on lawmakers from Trump's allies including Fox News Channel's Sean Hannity, it's unclear how long the holdouts can last. Jordan swiftly flipped dozens of detractors in a matter of days, shoring up Republicans who have few options left. "Jim Jordan will be a great speaker," the former president said outside the courthouse in Manhattan, where he is facing business fraud charges. "I think he's going to have the votes soon, if not today, over the next day or two."

The political climb has been steep for Jordan, the combative Judiciary Committee chairman and a founding member of the right-flank Freedom Cau-



Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, sits with Rep. Warren Davidson, R-Ohio, right, as Republicans finish the first round of voting for him to be the new House speaker, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, Oct. 17, 2023. Behind him from left are former Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., Rep. Derrick Van Orden, R-Wis., and Rep. Harriet Hageman, R-Wyo.

Associated Press

cus. He is known more as a chaos agent than a skilled legislator, raising questions about how he would lead. Congress faces daunting challenges, risking a federal shutdown at home if it fails to fund the government and fielding Biden's requests for aid to help Ukraine and Israel in the wars abroad.

With the House Republican majority narrowly held at 221-212, Jordan can afford to lose only a few votes to reach the 217 majority threshold, if there are no further absences.

Jordan conferred immediately afterward with McCarthy, who fared nearly as badly in January, having lost almost as many votes on the first of what would become a historic 15 ballots for the gavel.

As the somber roll call was underway, each lawmaker announcing their choice, the holdouts quickly surfaced.

One, Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., a leader of the cen-

trists, voted McCarthy, the ousted former speaker. Murmurs rippled through the chamber. Others voted for Majority Leader Steve Scalise, who was the party's first nominee to replace McCarthy before he, too, was rejected by hardliners last week.

Making the official nominating speech was another top Trump ally, GOP conference chairwoman Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York, who declared Jordan will be "We the people's speaker."

On the other side of the aisle, Democratic caucus chairman Rep. Pete Aguilar of California nominated Jeffries and warned that handing the speaker's gavel to a "vocal election denier" would be "a terrible message" at home and abroad.

Aguilar recited all the times Jordan voted against various measures -- abortion access, government aid and others, Democrats chanting "He said no!"

Upset that a small band of hard-liners have upended the House by ousting McCarthy, Republicans have watched their majority control of the chamber descend into public infighting. All House business has ground to a halt.

One holdout, Republican Rep. Ken Buck of Colorado, said Jordan's role in the runup to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol and his refusal to admit that Biden, a Democrat, won the 2020 election remained an issue.

"Jim, at some point, if he's going to lead this conference during the presidential election cycle and particularly in a presidential election year ... is going to have to be strong and say Donald Trump didn't win the election and we need to move forward," Buck said.

Others softened their opposition after Tuesday's first vote saying they they simply wanted to register their protest, but would be with

Jordan on subsequent balloting.

Jordan can rely on Trump's support as well as pressure on colleagues from an army of grassroots activists who recognize him from cable news and fiery performances at committee hearings. Republicans say it will become harder for rank-and-file lawmakers to oppose him in a public floor vote.

Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who engineered McCarthy's ouster by a handful of hard-liners — which did not include Jordan — publicly praised each lawmaker who has flipped to Jordan's column — and berated those who have not.

Democrats have decried the far-right shift, calling Jordan the leader of the chaos wing of the GOP.

Jordan has been a top Trump ally, particularly during the Jan. 6 Capitol attack by the former president's backers who were trying to overturn the 2020 election he lost to Biden. Days later, Trump awarded Jordan a Medal of Freedom.

Now the Republican Party's front-runner to challenge Biden in the 2024 election, Trump backed Jordan to replace McCarthy early on and was working against the nomination of Scalise, who withdrew after colleagues rejected their own rules and failed to coalesce around him.

Tensions remained high among Republicans exhausted by the internal party infighting.

Some Republicans resent being pressured by Jordan's allies and say they are being threatened with primary opponents if they don't support him as speaker. Others are simply upset at the way the whole process has dragged out. □

Cleanup cost for nuclear contamination sites has risen nearly \$1 billion

By JIM SALTER and
MICHAEL PHILLIS
Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The estimated future cost to clean up 19 sites contaminated by nuclear waste from the Cold War era has risen by nearly \$1 billion in the past seven years, according to a report released Tuesday by the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

The GAO report urges the Army Corps of Engineers to improve management practices for cleaning up contaminated sites under the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program, or FUSRAP. The recommendations include improved planning so resources can be better shared among sites and developing more comprehensive cost estimates.

Officials say inflation is partly to blame for the cost increase, along with uncertainties about the cleanup. The report found that four sites with "complicated cleanup remedies or large amounts of contamination" are responsible for about three-fourths of the cost increase. Two of those sites are in New York state — one near Niagara Falls and one in Lockport. The others are in Armstrong County, Pennsylvania, and in the St. Louis area. All told, the 19 FUSRAP sites are in eight states, all in the East or Midwest. The Department of Defense said they would work to implement the GAO's recommendations, the report stated.

"The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers remains committed to cleaning up and completing projects being executed under the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP) to protect the health and well-being of communities and the environment," a statement from the agency said. "We have received the Government Accountability Office's report and we are currently working to address their recommendations."

U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland, a member of the House Committee on Oversight and Account-



Coldwater Creek flows, April 7, 2023, in Florissant, Mo. A new report released on Tuesday, Oct. 17, by the Government Accountability Office says that future cleanup cost of 19 sites contaminated by Cold War era nuclear waste has risen \$1 billion since a 2016 estimate.

Associated Press

ability, noted that more than two-fifths of the sites are near low-income and minority communities.

"Decades after the federal government generated large amounts of toxic nuclear waste as a result of nuclear weapons production, America's most underserved communities still bear the brunt of deadly contamination from one of the most significant environmental disasters in our nation's history," Raskin said in a statement.

The Corps of Engineers reported about \$2.6 billion in future costs associated with FUSRAP, according to its fiscal year 2022 financial statement — nearly \$1 billion higher than 2016 estimates. The report said yearly inflation adjustments contributed to about half of the increased cost.

Corps officials said that the rest "stems from cleanup-related uncertainties, such as sites that did not have a complete estimate in 2016 because they were still under investigation, as well as sites where the understanding of the amount and accessibility of the contamination has changed over time," the report stated.

The report noted that FUSRAP sites vary from roughly a single acre to a site made up of 2,400 acres (971 hectares). Contamination largely consists of low levels of uranium, thorium, radium and associated decay products. The CDC's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease

says exposure over a long period may result in anemia, cataracts and other health conditions.

But in the St. Louis area, ac-

tivists have long fought for compensation for people with cancer and other serious illnesses might be connected to nuclear contam-

ination. Uranium was processed in St. Louis starting at the onset of World War II as America raced to develop nuclear bombs, and the waste has contaminated a creek, a landfill and other properties.

In July, reporting as part of an ongoing collaboration between The Missouri Independent, the non-profit newsroom MuckRock and The Associated Press cited thousands of pages of documents indicating decades of nonchalance and indifference about the risks posed by uranium contamination. The government documents were obtained by outside researchers through the Freedom of Information Act and shared with the news organizations. □

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Can New York's mayor speak Mandarin? No, but with AI he's making robocalls

By **ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE**
Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — New York City Mayor Eric Adams has been using artificial intelligence to make robocalls that contort his own voice into several languages he doesn't actually speak, posing new ethical questions about the government's use of the rapidly evolving technology.

The mayor told reporters about the robocalls on Monday and said they've gone out in languages such as Mandarin and Yiddish to promote city hiring events. They haven't included any disclosure that he only speaks English or that the calls were generated using AI.

"People stop me on the street all the time and say, 'I didn't know you speak Mandarin, you know?'" said Adams, a Democrat. "The robocalls that we're using, we're using different languages to speak directly to the diversity of New Yorkers."

The calls come as regulators struggle to get a handle on how best to ethically and legally navigate the use of artificial intelligence, where deepfake videos or audio can make it appear that anyone anywhere is doing anything a person



New York City Mayor Eric Adams speaks in New York's Times Square during a news conference, Dec. 30, 2022.

Associated Press

on the other side of a computer screen wants them to do.

In New York, the watchdog group Surveillance Technology Oversight Project slammed Adams' robocalls as an unethical use of artificial intelligence that is misleading to city residents.

"The mayor is making deep fakes of himself," said Albert Fox Cahn, executive director of the organization. "This is deeply unethical, especially on the taxpayer's dime. Using AI to convince

New Yorkers that he speaks languages that he doesn't is outright Orwellian. Yes, we need announcements in all of New Yorkers' native languages, but the deep fakes are just a creepy vanity project."

The growing use of artificial intelligence and deepfakes, especially in politics and election misinformation, has prompted calls and moves toward greater regulation from government and major media companies.

Google was the first big tech company to say it would impose new labels on deceptive AI-generated political advertisements that could fake a candidate's voice or actions for election misinformation. Facebook and Instagram parent Meta doesn't have a rule specific to AI-generated political ads but has a policy restricting "faked, manipulated or transformed" audio and imagery used for misinformation. A bipartisan bill in the U.S.

Senate would ban "materially deceptive" deepfakes relating to federal candidates, with exceptions for parody and satire. This month, two Democratic members of Congress sent a letter to the heads of Meta and X, formally known as Twitter, to express concerns about AI-generated political ads on their social media platforms.

In September, the music streaming service Spotify introduced an AI feature to translate a podcast into multiple languages in the podcaster's voice. More recently, the startup ElevenLabs in October introduced a voice translation tool that it said "can convert spoken content to another language in minutes, while preserving the voice of the original speaker." A spokesperson for the mayor's office said they used ElevenLabs' tool for their robocalls. Native speakers listened to the recordings before they went out to ensure the translations were accurate. Calls have been made in Spanish, Yiddish, Mandarin, Cantonese and Haitian Creole. The city has also used the technology to promote a series of concerts organized by the Adams administration, the spokesperson said. □



A U.S. Navy plane passes by a Chinese flag as it flies over the areas of Second Thomas Shoal, locally known as Ayungin Shoal, at the disputed South China Sea while Chinese coast guard ships tries to block Philippine coast guard and supply ships during a rotation and resupply mission on Aug. 22, 2023.

Associated Press

By **TARA COPP**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon has released footage of some of the more than 180 intercepts of

U.S. warplanes by Chinese aircraft that have occurred in the last two years — more than the total amount over the previous decade and part of a trend U.S. military

Pentagon releases footage of hundreds of 'highly concerning' aircraft intercepts by Chinese planes

officials called concerning. The photos and video were released in advance of a soon-to-be issued annual report by the Pentagon on the China's military power and the security threats it may pose to partners in the Indo-Pacific.

The Pentagon has tried for years to posture itself to be ready for a potential conflict with China over Taiwan even as it now finds itself supporting allies in two hot wars, Ukraine in Europe and Israel in the Middle East.

Admiral John Aquilino, head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, said at a Pentagon press briefing Tuesday

that despite the U.S. surging carrier strike groups and amphibious ships to support Israel, and now almost 20 months of war in Ukraine, "I haven't had one piece of equipment or force structure depart" his command, referring to ships, aircraft and military units. "We have been taking a number of steps to strengthen our commitment to the region, strengthen our deterrence in the region and we will continue to do that," he said.

The officials said the Chinese flights were risky and aggressive in nature, but stopped short of calling

most of them unsafe — a specific term that is used only in the most egregious cases. Still the officials said it was important to release the footage and call out the behavior because they said it was part of a larger trend of regional intimidation by China that could accidentally lead to conflict.

"All of these examples we've released today underscore the coercive intent of (China) by engaging in behaviors particularly in international airspace," said Ely Ratner, assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific security affairs. □

Ukraine claims a major strike on Russian airfields and thanks U.S.

By **ILLIA NOVIKOV**

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) —

Ukraine on Tuesday claimed to have carried out one of the most destructive attacks on Russian air assets since the beginning of the war, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy saying the assault used longer-range ballistic missiles donated by the United States.

Zelenskyy's announcement came hours after a U.S. official revealed that the longer-range ballistic missiles sought for months by Kyiv and promised by President Joe Biden had been delivered quietly and are in battlefield use.

Ukraine's Special Operations Forces claimed it destroyed nine Russian helicopters at two airfields in Russia-occupied regions in a nighttime attack on targets in eastern and southern Ukraine.

It also hit military equipment, an air-defense system, ammunition warehouses and runways, a statement said. Dozens of Russian military personnel were injured in the attack codenamed Operation Dragonfly, it said.

Several U.S. officials said that Washington provided Ukraine with a small number of the Army Tactical Missile System, known as



A Ukrainian soldier in his position in Avdiivka, Donetsk region, Ukraine, on Aug. 18, 2023.

Associated Press

ATACMS, making good on a promise made by Biden last month.

Zelenskyy offered "special thanks" to the United States for sending the ATACMS. "Our agreements with President Biden are being implemented," Zelenskyy said in his usual evening address to the nation, saying the ATACMS "have proven themselves."

The weapons development piles pressure on the Kremlin as both sides look for battlefield advantages ahead of winter and what is shaping up as a protracted war of attrition.

While some versions of the missiles can go as far as about 180 miles (about 300 kilometers), the ones sent to Ukraine have a shorter range and carry cluster munitions, which, when fired, open in the air, releasing hundreds of bomblets rather than a single warhead. According to a U.S. official, the ones delivered to Ukraine have a maximum range of a bit more than 100 miles (roughly 160 kilometers).

The Ukrainian statement didn't say how the targets were hit. Russian authorities didn't comment on the re-

port. It wasn't immediately possible to verify the two sides' battlefield claims.

The airfields, in the Luhansk and Berdyansk regions, are located behind the front line. The Russian military apparently thought that they were at a safe distance from Ukrainian attacks.

Meanwhile, Russia is throwing more units into its effort to take a key eastern Ukraine city, Western analysts say, after apparent setbacks that have slowed its dayslong onslaught.

The attempt to storm Avdiivka, a heavily defended city that stands in the way

of Moscow's ambition of securing control of the entire Donetsk region, is Moscow's most significant offensive operation in Ukraine since the start of the year, the U.K. defense ministry said Tuesday.

The Kremlin's push to claim Avdiivka comes after months of fending off Ukraine's counteroffensive, which Kyiv launched some 16 months after Russia's full-scale invasion.

The Russian forces deployed to Avdiivka are likely making slow progress and sustaining high casualties in what is proving a costly effort, the U.K. defense ministry said on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter.

The pace of Russia's attack on the heavily fortified target has reportedly slowed in recent days since its launch last week, a Washington-based think tank said. Russian officials made no immediate comment on developments around Avdiivka.

Citing the Ukrainian General Staff, the Institute for the Study of War said Ukrainian forces pushed back 22 Russian attacks on Monday, down from 30 reported assaults the previous day. Kyiv officials said Russia mounted up to 60 attacks per day in the middle of last week. □

Legal challenge to dethrone South Africa's Zulu king heads to court

By **MOGOMOTSI MAGOME**

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) —

The battle for the throne of South Africa's ethnic Zulu nation has reached the courts as a faction of the royal family seeks to dethrone the king after less than a year.

The North Gauteng High Court in the capital Pretoria is hearing legal arguments this week in the royal succession battle between King Misuzulu kaZwelithini and his half-brother, Prince Simakade Zulu, who believes he is entitled to be king. The Zulu nation is the

largest ethnic group in South Africa with an estimated 12 million Zulu-speaking people, predominantly in the KwaZulu-Natal region. They are acknowledged for resisting British colonialism in the early 1800s and the Zulu king is arguably the most influential traditional leader in South Africa. Prince Simakade wants the court to overturn President Cyril Ramaphosa's recognition of King Misuzulu as the rightful heir.

He is disputing the traditional and legal processes followed to appoint Misuzulu, and his lawyers have

told the court that Ramaphosa's decision to recognize Misuzulu and grant him the relevant certificate was rushed. Previous attempts to stop the coronation of the king were unsuccessful last year. Misuzulu ascended to the throne last year after the 2021 death of his father, King Goodwill Zwelithini, who ruled for over 50 years, making him the longest reigning Zulu monarch. Addressing the court on Tuesday, Ramaphosa's lawyer, Marumo Moerane, argued that the president's issuance of the certificate recognizing Misuzulu as



South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, left, shakes hand with King Misuzulu kaZwelithini as he hands over a certificate of recognition at the Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban, South Africa, on Oct. 29, 2022.

Associated Press

the heir to the throne followed consultations with the Zulu royal family, which confirmed him as the king. Ramaphosa also relied on

previous court judgments which dismissed earlier legal challenges disputing Misuzulu's ascension to the throne, he said. □

In Brazil's Amazon, rivers fall to record low levels during drought

By **FABIANO MAISONNAVE**
Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — The Negro River, the Amazon's second largest tributary, on Monday reached its lowest level since official measurements began near Manaus 121 years ago. The record confirms that this part of the world's largest rainforest is suffering its worst drought, just a little over two years after its most significant flooding. In the morning, the water level in the city's port went as low as 13.5 meters (44.3 feet), down from 30.02 meters (98.5 feet) registered in June 2021 — its highest level on record. The Negro River drains about 10% of the Amazon basin and is the world's sixth largest by water volume.

Madeira River, another main tributary of the Amazon, has also recorded historically low levels, causing the halt of the Santo Antonio hydroelectric dam, Brazil's fourth largest. Throughout Brazil's Amazon, low river levels have left hundreds of riverine communities isolated and struggling to get access to drinkable water. The drought also has disrupted commercial navigation that supplies Manaus, a city of 2 million with a large industrial park. Manaus is the largest city



A little boy walks across a dry, cracked area of the Negro River near his houseboat during a drought in Manaus, Amazonas state, Brazil, Monday, Oct. 16, 2023.

Associated Press

and capital of Amazonas, the state hit hardest by the drought. In late September, 55 of 62 municipalities there entered states of emergency due to the severe drought.

"There is no more water to go through. Navigation is over," boatman Cledson Lopes Brasil told The Associated Press.

Brasil operates in Marina do Davi port, a getaway to dozens of riverine communities, some of them with sandy beaches that attract tourists. The once bustling area is now surrounded by parched soil, with many

boathouses high and dry. For one month now, Brasil has switched to a lower-powered boat, better suited for shallow waters. Still, he can't reach most communities along Taruma-Açu, a tributary of the Negro River. Some riverine dwellers must walk up to three hours to reach their houses — and tourism has stopped altogether.

Manaus and other nearby cities are also suffering from high temperatures and heavy smoke from nearby man-caused fires for deforestation and pasture clearance. The drought is also

the likely cause of dozens of river dolphin deaths in Tefe Lake, near the Amazon River.

This is a startling contrast to July 2021, when Negro River waters took over part of the Manaus downtown area. The historic flood, which also ruined crops of hundreds of riverine communities, lasted for about three months.

Negro River ends near Manaus, where it converges with the Amazon River, which is called the Solimões River in Brazil upstream from this confluence. In Brazilian maps, this marks the begin-

ning of the Amazon, with Negro as the second main tributary. In international maps, however, the Amazon River begins in Peru.

Philip Fearnside, an American researcher at the Brazilian National Institute of Amazonian Research, a public agency, expects the situation to deteriorate, both during the ongoing event and in the future with increasing frequency and severity of similar events with climate change.

He said surface water in the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean is now warmer than during the "Godzilla" El Niño of 2015-2016 and is expanding. In the Amazon, these Pacific warmings primarily lead to droughts in the northern part of the region. Moreover, a warm water patch in the tropical North Atlantic Ocean is causing drought in the southern part of the Amazon, similar to what happened in 2005 and 2010, according to researchers.

"The forecast is for the start of the rains to be delayed compared to normal, and for a drier-than-normal rainy season," Fearnside said. "This could result not only in extreme low water this year, but also low levels in 2024. Until the rainy season begins in the basin, the situation that is already underway should worsen." □



United Nations peacekeepers stand guard at the entrance to a polling station covered in separatist flags and graffiti supporting the creation of the independent state of Azawad, in Kidal, Mali on July, 27, 2013.

Associated Press

By **BABA AHMED**
Associated Press

BAMAKO, Mali (AP) — United Nations peacekeepers started departing from

two bases in northern Mali Monday as part of a forced withdrawal from the country amid increasing insecurity and a rise in attacks by

U.N. peacekeepers in Mali withdraw from two bases in the north as fighting intensifies

Islamic extremists.

The U.N. mission said it wanted to complete its departure quickly from two camps in the Kidal region, Tessalit and Aguelhok. Attacks in northern Mali have more than doubled since the peacekeepers completed the first phase of their withdrawal in August.

"In view of the rapidly deteriorating security conditions for the lives of hundreds of peacekeepers ... the mission is doing its utmost to complete this process as soon as possible, including if necessary, accelerating its withdrawal from the Kidal camp, originally scheduled

for mid-November," a UN statement said. Earlier this year, Mali's military junta ordered the U.N. mission to leave the country, which has struggled to contain an Islamic extremist insurgency since 2012. The operation in Mali became one of the most dangerous in the world, with more than 150 peacekeepers killed since it began operations in 2013. Violence is spiking between ethnic Tuareg rebels, known as the Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development (CSP-PSD) and Mali's military. Analysts say the uptick signals

the breakdown of a 2015 peace agreement signed between the government and the rebels who once drove security forces out of northern Mali as they sought to create the state of Azawad.

Earlier this month the rebels said they captured another military base from the army in the north.

On Monday, Mali's military said on X, formerly Twitter, that its aircraft came under heavy fire as it approached Tessalit's airport. The army neutralized the enemy and the aircraft was able to land and take off without problems, it said. □

Po-kè Ono - A Taste of Asia with a Twist: Exploring Flavorful Fusion



Amidst the vibrant paradise of Aruba, where turquoise waters meet golden sands, a culinary gem awaits: Po-kè Ono, the coolest Asian fusion spot that will whisk you away on an exotic flavor adventure. Experience an explosion of Asian tastes like never before led by the creative genius of Chef Urvin Croes, the mastermind behind Aruba's acclaimed Infini restaurant. Po-kè Ono serves up an enticing menu that blends traditional Asian flavors with modern twists, all within a cheery ambiance that exudes warmth and tropical charm.

At Po-kè Ono, diners can savor an array of flavors from the new menu items that stand out for their artful presentation and delectable taste. One of the highlights is the traditional Vietnamese Pho, a soul-soothing soup consisting of bone broth, rice noodles, succulent thinly sliced meat, fresh herbs, and zesty spices, making it an explosion of taste in every spoonful.

Another must-try dish is The Elvis Presley Bao, a playful homage to the King of Rock 'n' Roll. This fun creation features fried spam with sweet teriyaki, peanut sauce, crispy fried plantains, crisp let-



tuce, red onions, and a spicy kick from the Kewpie mayo. The combination of sweet, savory, and spicy flavors is a harmony that leaves guests coming back for more.

If you're craving a delicious fusion of Indonesian and Hawaiian influences, the Babi Sate Poke hits all the right notes. Indonesian-style pork skewers are served with rich peanut sauce, crunchy crispy onions, pickled cucumber, and creamy avocado, resulting in a medley of textures and flavors that captivate the palate.

Beyond the flavors, Po-kè Ono impresses with its thoughtfully curated ambiance that reflects the Asian fusion theme. With two locations in Renaissance Marketplace and the lobby of Azure Residence, the restaurant exudes a tropical and laid-back vibe, inviting guests to unwind and indulge in a delightful dining experience. The use of fun cocktail glasses and relaxed decor further enhances the sense of pleasure, making every visit a memorable one.

Get ready for double the fun at Po-kè Ono with their awesome two-for-one happy hour. From 4 pm to 6 pm, this fantastic deal lets you dive into selected items at an incredible value. It's the perfect opportunity to try out their fresh new menu while sipping on delightful beverages.

Meet the culinary maestro, Chef Urvin Croes, the creative force behind Po-kè Ono and Infini. With an unyielding passion for Asian cuisine, rooted in his Chinese heritage, he sprinkles his magic on every plate at Po-kè Ono, crafting innovative and artfully delicious dishes. Having honed his skills in top-notch hotel restaurants and even snatching the title of 'Iron Chef Aruba's first winner,' Chef Urvin's culinary expertise shines through in every mouthwatering bite.



Promoting Aruba as a culinary destination, Chef Urvin sources ingredients locally whenever possible, supporting farmers who share his passion for quality produce. The result is a menu that expertly balances traditional recipes with modern techniques, elevating every dish to new heights. His love for food and the cultural stories behind each creation are evident in the passionate manner in which he prepares and presents his dishes.

Notably, Po-kè Ono has earned its well-deserved reputation as the number one restaurant on Tripadvisor Palm Beach, a testament to its success

and popularity among locals and tourists alike.

Po-kè Ono is like a treasure trove of Asian fusion delights, all crafted with love and expertise by the one and only Chef Urvin Croes. You'll be treated to an array of dishes, from Pho to inventive Bao creations, each artfully presented. The relaxed ambiance and awesome two-for-one happy hour make dining here an absolute pleasure. Once you've tasted the magic of Po-kè Ono, you'll be coming back for more! So, what are you waiting for? Dive in and indulge in this captivating world of Asian-inspired goodness! □

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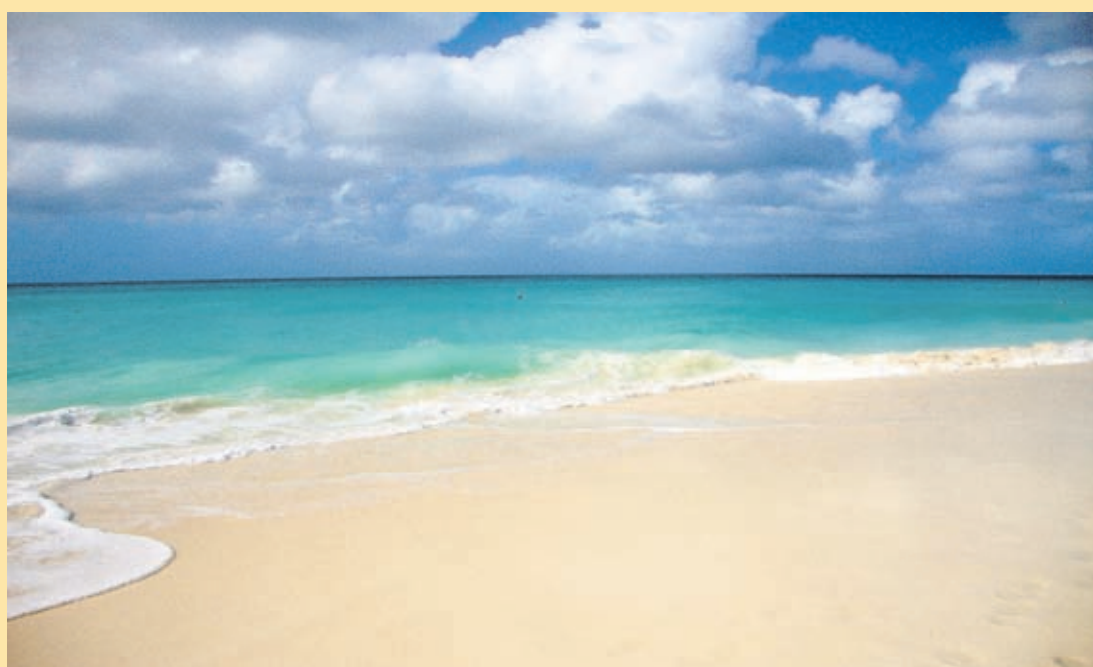
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hour gym access, 10-minute complimentary massage and much more.

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Aruba to me



ORANJESTAD — You are back or still enjoying your vacation?... we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

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Create museum memories

ORANJESTAD — Museums are an integral part of conserving and honoring cultures, and Aruba is no exception. Our Island has a wide selection of various museums for our locals and visitors to see. Take this opportunity to learn about our island and experience a different day beyond the beach. Let us introduce to you these museums.

Museum of Industry Aruba

The Museum of Industry is located in San Nicolas—better known as the art capital of Aruba. This museum exhibits the industrial history of gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and tourism through elaborated displays and multimedia installations.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower in San Nicolas and narrates Aruba's industrial history, which began in the 19th century. The Water Tower was built in 1939 and consists of three sections: the substructure, the high-rising vertical shaft, and the tank at the top. The Water Tower was purchased by the Monuments Fund in 2003 so it can

be restored and preserved as one of Aruba's monuments. The Museum of Industry is part of Aruba Museum Foundation (Fundacion Museo Aruban), which is a foundation set to maintain, preserve, and protect the Aruban cultural sector, history, and nature. The museum of Industry is open daily from 9 am till 6 pm. For more information, check out their Facebook page Museum of Industry Aruba.

Archaeological Museum of Aruba

The Archaeological Museum of Aruba is located at Schelpstraat 42 in downtown Oranjestad. The renovated historic Ecury complex in the area has been transformed from a family home to a modern museum that preserves Aruba's Amerindian cultural heritage. This 21st century museum is especially designed to preserve valuable artifacts dating back to the Pre-Ceramic period of 2500 BC.

In the late 1980's, AMA identified its need for an adequate housing

for its collection and activities. After studying various options, a project proposal was drawn up, including the acquisition and restoration of historical buildings in downtown Oranjestad.

These historical buildings were formerly the property of the Ecury family. The "Ecury Complex", is a cluster of single and two-story historic buildings, mainly Dutch colonial architecture from the late 19th and 20th century on a plot of approximately 1.700 m2.

In 1997, the Aruban Government bought the complex for the National Archaeological Museum project. In 2004, a financial agreement was signed with the European Development Fund and in 2006, restoration and construction work began on the monumental buildings and the soon-to-be exhibition space. In December 2007, the key to the complex was delivered and the museum's employees moved to the new location. The final de-

sign for the exhibit was completed in November 2007 and the permanent exhibit, financed by the Aruban Government and the Union of Cultural Organizations (UNOCA), opened in July 2009.

At the new location, the National Archaeological Museum Aruba disposes of approximately 500 m2 for its permanent exhibit. This exhibit conveys information on the origin and culture of the first inhabitants of the island through archaeological objects and modern exhibition techniques. The new permanent exhibit gives the visitor an insight into the cultures that inhabited the island in Pre-Historical and Early Historical times. The museum also hosts attractive public programs, including lectures, educational projects, temporary exhibits and workshops.

The museum is open daily from 9:30 am till 4:30 pm. For more information check out the Facebook page Museo Arqueologico Nacional Aruba. □

Why You Should Not Miss Aruba's Free City Center Street Car Tour

ORANJESTAD - Aruba's City Center Street Car - or as we call it in Dutch; "Tram van Oranjestad" - is a single track tram line in Oranjestad, the capital city of Aruba. It was inaugurated on 22 December 2012, being the first and so far the only passenger rail service on Aruba and the rest of the Dutch Caribbean.



an. There are two trolleys, a single-deck one with 42 seats and a double-decker with 64 seats. The line was inspired by the popular battery-powered streetcar operation at the Grove in Los Angeles, USA. Aruba's streetcars are powered by hydrogen fuel cells, which are charged by the island's year-round trade winds.

Caya Betico Croes, mostly referred to as our "main street" has been developed into a pollution-free pedestrian mall. The double-decker offers you a 360 degree view of the downtown area with a picture

perfect scenery of the island's clear blue skies. Who would not enjoy a ride on this beautiful and naturally air-conditioned vehicle? The tour consists of a total of 9 stops approximately 200 meters apart from each other; all stops are clearly marked. The tram will bring you close to different museums, historical plazas, monuments, the Protestant church, Aruba's high-end mall, retail shops, and a variety of local and international cuisine restaurants. The "I love Aruba" trademark also belongs to that list. The third stop on the route is close to a 5-minute

walk to the famous Renaissance Marina showcasing luxurious yachts and Aruba's blue waters.

The "Tram van Oranjestad" starts from a balloon loop near the Port of Call and serves the downtown area

and ends at Plaza Nicky. The first ride starts at 10:00 am sharp with intervals of 25minutes. The last trolley departs from the cruise port at 5:00pm. Don't miss this tour of the beautiful Aruba's City Center- it is free for all! □

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Article by Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to high rise Hotels



Rethink Tourism

Episode CCXXVIII – 228

It is time to rethink tourism. The phrase “no more hotels” represents the critical reality that our island experiences. The discontent and sadness of the local population are a direct and critical response to irresponsible political management and a crisis of representation that traps Aruba in a vicious triangle where foreign investors and cheap foreign labor impoverish and outrage the existence of the local population. Here are the three sides of a probably unstoppable triangle.

We are living in a moment where the majority of our tourism-exploiting industries solely concentrate on increasing their corporate revenues with no real concern regarding any negative consequences that may result from their practices that harm the ecosystem, demographics, and attitude of our population. The negative impact is growing out of proportion, reflecting great discontent among locals expressed through active protest and passive vandalism. Social problems like emerging poverty, delinquency, domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, teen pregnancy, and dropouts are just a few iceberg tips that destroy dignity. These are global problems that we share, generated by happy-go-lucky, lack of vision political leaders and multinational lobbyists with no concern for island progress. Now “vandalism” ironically gives a voice to the desperate cry of our citizens through a turtle monument that begs awareness for NO MORE HOTELS, an outcry that can be erased with some paint but does not change a regrettable reality that many islanders feel by justifying the unjustifiable through a vandalic expression.

Our beautiful island, in addition to stretching its carrying capacity with overflow trash, negatively compromising our environmental resources, limiting the recovery of our endangered native species, and changing the natural landscape, also generates discomfort and rejection among long-time visitors' residents when faced with this fact. The construction of buildings on the beachfront continues, destroying the coast line and damaging the once fantastic view of the Aruban sunset.

Today's phenomenon is the transformation of residential areas into new RB&B facilities, with all consequences. Where there is partying all night, noise contamination, overflow garbage bins, septic tanks, etc. This practice continues despite the opposition of residents who are confronted with these kinds of problems, which shows the growing concerns of different interests and disparate property owners.

Rulers who do nothing to defend the small territory, despite saying that they do, and who continue to prioritize quantity over quality Caravans of cars that advance with difficulty and slowly everywhere indicate an “obvious” way that the island lives off tourism, but massively and with locals without resources. Not only does it not make sense, but it is true vandalism towards its resources and its population.

A large part of the population thinks that the current model has reached its breaking limit and should not be expanded further, should incline towards the quality, uniqueness, and security of our tourism industry, and that the existing method must drastically be re-



duced.

However, a few locals are filling their own pockets, and others with no connection to the land at all fervently defend the idea that the more tourists and hotels, the better it will be for everyone. Now to add insult to injury, a passivity of a government that only focuses on the flip side of the coin, who are managing Aruba like it belongs only to them and the foreign investors they cater to with no sensitivity towards the island.

The possible solution to this growing problem seems to be simple: not giving new permits to build, retracting given permits, and deconstructing unfinished projects. Giving the land a chance to regenerate. However, it is not so easily done. A long-term plan should be implemented to achieve many related objectives with sustainable purposes that require a greater degree of sensitivity. Meanwhile, various associations have been working to stop urban speculation and have been warning for decades that its consequences are becoming more evident every day.

The beaches, full of hotels, make co-existence a challenge for both locals and visitors. Bathing in Malmok-Tres Trapi- Boca Catalina or Arashi becomes a battle to find a place without boats

that sometimes do not respect the rules or exceed the space (sometimes delimited), becoming a potential danger for bathers.

Aruba's natural heritage is being degraded day by day. Its marine flora and fauna are affected by vessels that anchor without control. We found turtles with shells smashed by the boat's engines. Aruba needs to rethink tourism because a tourist girl was destroyed by a boat engine, another little girl lost her leg in an ATV accident, and another visitor also lost a leg after being injured in contaminated waters. And the government continues to be insensitive!

Discontent among the local population grows day by day, but vandalism is to write NO MORE HOTELS; a cry erased with paint does not change a regrettable reality.□

If you love Aruba beyond beaches, book a magical glimpse inside a private residence called Etnia Nativa, a place that integrates reused materials and is full of art, culture, and island heritage. You will be guided by the owner-builder and cultural expert. It's a highly recommended experience! WhatsApp +297 592 2702 etnianativa03@gmail.com

Did you know about...?

The history and meaning of the Aruban florin

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today is proud to officially introduce a new segment called Did you know about...?, where we dive into some (historical) facts of Aruba, its culture and way of living. In this first edition, we look back at the Aruban florin: its history, design and symbolism.

In Aruba, we know the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cent coins, along with the 1 and 5 Florin coin. Aruban Florin bills include the 10, 25, 50, 100, and rarely, the 200 bills. In Papiamentu we call our currency Florin, but the umbrella term for money is placa. Cents are called cen (pronounced: seng), both in the singular and plural form. Most coins are circular and their size depend on their worth. However, the 50 cent coin is easily recognizable by their square shape, as is the 5 Florin coin by their golden color. Every coin has the Aruban emblem carved on it, with the other side displaying the worth of the coin. The bigger 1 and 5 florin coins, however, contain the carving of the emblem on one side, while displaying the side profile of the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on the other side. When his mother, Princess Beatrix, was reigning queen, it was her profile that was carved on the two coins.

Outdated Aruban coins and their names

In the past, Aruban coins had distinctive names and also varied in worth. For example, a 5-cent coin was once called Dos placa; 10-cent coins were called debchi; 25-cent coins were called diez placa and the 50-cent coin was once called Yotin (pronounced: jo-teen). We also used a distinctive coins worth 2 ½ cents, called placa too. However, this last coin is no longer in use and has become a relic of Aruban money. Back then, the 5-Florin coin used to also be square, but now it is circular.



Aruban bills: their design and symbolism

The Aruban Florin collection contains a variation of colorful bills, displaying incredibly detailed and beautiful designs that tell the story of Aruba on a single piece of paper.

Prior to 2019, the Aruban Florin bills were relatively simpler in design compared to now, but still included beautiful designs and colors, often depicting local animals. These past designs were made by the Aruban artist Everino Fingal in 1990 up to 2019. Between 1990 and 1993, the 5 Florin coin was a bill. The Fingal designs also included a 500-Florin bill, which has now been discontinued.

In 2019, the Central Bank

of Aruba commissioned a new design of the Aruba Florin bills, this time selecting artist and former art teacher, Nigel Matthew, to present his new design. Matthew kept the tradition of including local animals and the familiar colors on the bills. However, he included additional designs

that represent the Aruban culture and link to the Indigenous inhabitants that were the first to set foot on the island.

Current design and symbolism

10 florin

On the 10-florin bill, you can see a Turtuga blanco (white turtle). The blue color symbolizes the blue Caribbean Sea. You can also see the ruins of the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins, a coral motif, and the symbols of Cas Floria (traditional Aruban house design) with a piece of mosaic.

25 florin

On this orange bill, you can see an Aruban medicinal plant called Shoshoro. The birds Trupiaal, Shoco, rock drawings, and the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic are also depicted. There is also a Purun di ceramica (clay pot), in

reference to the relics left behind by our indigenous ancestors.

50 florin

On this bill, we see the Cododo (blue lizard found on the ABC islands), Cangre di tera (land crab), Willem III Tower, and again the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, as well as a beach plant called Banana di rif. The colors are pink/purple.

100 florin

This bill is green in color, representing nature. Here we see the Yuwana (Iguana), Aloe, Toteki (lizard), the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, and a dance group performing the Baile di cinta (folkloric dance with silk ribbons).

200 florin

There is another bill with a value of 200 dollars. The brown color symbolizes the earth of Aruba. Here we see the Dornasol and the Warawara—both local birds, along with the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, the Tuna cactus plant, and the Caha di orgel (folkloric instrument, used for many traditional songs).

Extra fact:

the word "florin" supposedly is named after the Italian city of Florence or it's a reference to the Italian word "florino", both explanations related to historical Italian currencies.□

Source: Placa, placa, placa by the National Library of Aruba



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

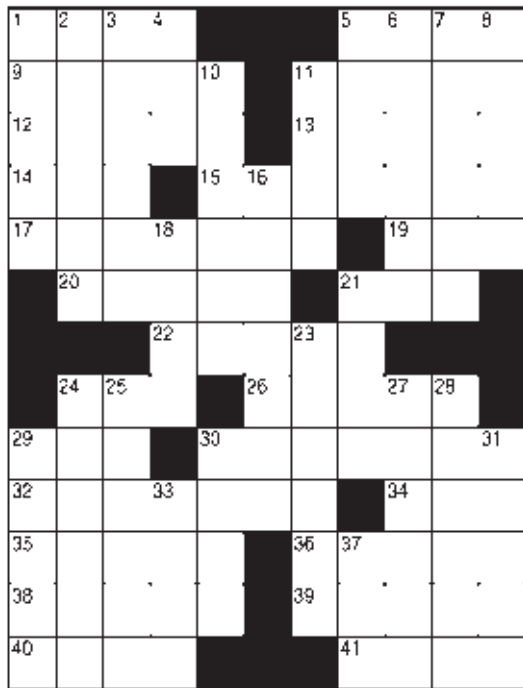
- ACROSS**
- 36 Scottish lord
5 Visibility lessener
9 Cut off
11 Printer need
12 Ship of 1492
13 Heart, e.g.

- DOWN**
- 14 Words with pickle, stew or jam
15 Dessert tube
17 Packing plant
19 Fish eggs
20 Kick off
21 Diet no-no
22 Hit's counterpart
24 Mornings: Abbr.
26 Bath bars
29 Relaxing retreat
30 Choral composition
32 South-western bar
34 Fireplace item
35 Quartet doubled

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V E E P S
B R E T R U S H
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B U R L A P D E E P
S O A P T E R N
D R E A M
F A L L I N G O U T S
A L O E O U T S E T
B E G S S P E E D Y

Yesterday's answer

- 8 Bert's buddy
10 Indy autos
11 Theater prize
16 Craftsman
18 Collars
21 Accomplishment
23 Be generous
24 Cochise's people
25 Chanted word
27 Sense of taste
28 Gems
29 "Ivanhoe" writer
30 Refer to
31 Deal maker
33 Abound
37 Bowler or boater



10-18

A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's. X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

10-18

CRYPTOQUOTE

H X H E C D F V Z I E H W G F I Z S X R

S T F U B , Z C X G Z S F K X S E S C P S T ,

J P S U E S F S V S Y F U . — J Z C I Z C Z

O F U B V E G K X C

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: AS YOU LIVE DEEPER IN THE HEART, THE MIRROR GETS CLEANER AND CLEANER. — RUMI

Millennial Money: The questions you aren't asking (but should) during open enrollment

By KATE ASHFORD
of NerdWallet

Open enrollment is no one's idea of a good time, but health coverage is a crucial part of your financial health. Whether you're getting insurance through an employer or the Affordable Care Act marketplace, it's important to ask the right questions before you choose a health plan for 2024.

Here's how to weigh your options.

ARE YOUR DOCTORS IN NETWORK?

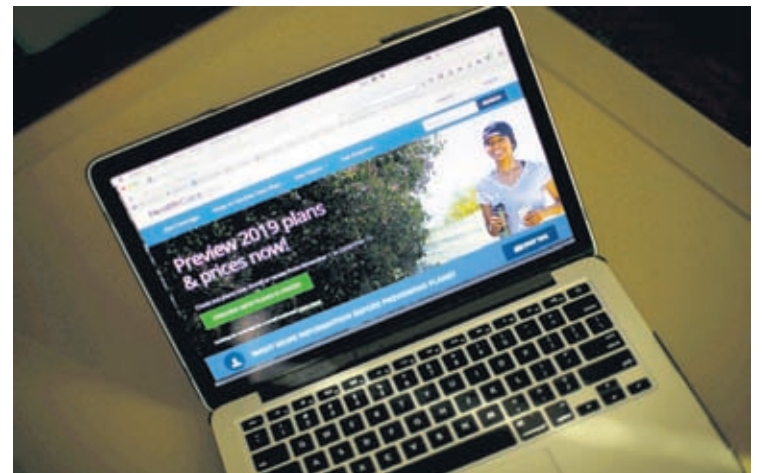
Plan networks change from year to year. If you love your doctor or specialist, make sure they're still in the network of the plan you're considering for 2024.

You should also consider whether you want the option to go out of the network — which you can usually do in a preferred provider organization, or PPO, plan, although it will cost more. Health maintenance organizations, or HMOs, tend to be cheaper but lack the out-of-network flexibility.

ARE YOUR MEDICATIONS COVERED?

If you're on prescription medications, check plan formularies to make sure you understand how your drugs will be covered in 2024. Drug coverage can change from year to year, even if you stick with the same plan.

"Even if you were in an Aetna plan before, and you say, 'Well, I'll stay with Aetna again,' you still want to look and make sure the medication you're taking is still on the formulary," says Abbie Leibowitz, chief medical officer and co-founder



The HealthCare.gov website is photographed in Washington, Wednesday, Oct. 31, 2018.

Associated Press

of Health Advocate, which provides integrated health advocacy and health benefits programs.

WHAT ARE THE OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS?

Every plan has set costs, like the monthly premiums, plus the costs of care, which include the deductible and any copays and coinsurance. Comparing plans means estimating how much health care you'll use next year.

On the one hand, you have the costs you'd pay if you don't use the plan much beyond preventive care. On the other hand, you have the maximum amount you could pay in each plan if you're a heavy health care user. You can easily compare these situations.

There's a squishy middle ground, however, where the best plan for you depends on the amount and type of care you'll need next year.

"The tricky part is we never really know how much we're going to spend in a given year if we're in the middle," says Adam Rosenfeld, a health care benefits

expert and president of employee benefits company Rubicon Benefits. The best thing, he says, is to look at your current claims information and imagine that the next year will be identical. On which plan would you be better off?

"It's the best predictive modeling you can do at this point," Rosenfeld says.

IS A HIGH-DEDUCTIBLE PLAN RIGHT FOR YOU?

A high-deductible health plan, or HDHP, in 2024 is defined as a plan with a deductible of at least \$1,600 for individual coverage or \$3,200 for family coverage, with out-of-pocket maximums of no more than \$8,050 or \$16,100, respectively. HDHPs usually have lower premiums, and sometimes companies kick in a contribution to a health savings account, or HSA, to help cover the deductible.

An HDHP can be an appropriate plan for people in a variety of health situations, as long as they're prepared to pay the deductible if they need health care.

"The question is, 'Can you afford it?'" says Adria Gross, an insurance broker, consultant and founder of MedWise Insurance Advocacy, which helps clients and attorneys with medical claims issues. If you're healthy, Gross says, go for the HDHP. But in the case of a bad accident, you'll want to make sure you have the means to pay the full deductible. □

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24/7

Chinese search engine company Baidu unveils Ernie 4.0 AI model, claims that it rivals GPT-4



An attendee walks past a display at the Baidu World conference in Beijing, on Nov. 1, 2018.

By ZEN SOO

AP Technology Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Chinese search engine and artificial intelligence firm Baidu on Tuesday unveiled a new version of its artificial intelligence model, Ernie 4.0, claiming that it rivals models such as GPT-4 in the U.S. Baidu's CEO Robin Li demonstrated Ernie 4.0 at the company's annual Baidu World conference in Beijing. He said the model has achieved comprehension, reasoning, memory and generation, which uses algorithms to produce and create new content. Li said that Ernie 4.0 was able to understand complex questions and instructions and apply reasoning and logic to generate answers to questions.

"It is not inferior in any aspect to GPT-4," Li said, stating that

the latest model was "significantly improved" compared to its original Ernie Bot model. In a live demonstration, Li prompted Ernie 4.0 to generate advertising materials including advertising posters and a marketing video. He also asked Ernie 4.0 to come up with a martial arts novel complete with characters with various personalities. Baidu is a frontrunner among a slew of Chinese companies racing to come up with artificial intelligence models, after OpenAI's ChatGPT took the world by storm last year. Beijing sees artificial intelligence as a key industry to rival the United States and aims to become a global leader by 2030.

Beijing-based Baidu started off as a search engine firm and over the past decade has invested heavily in artificial intelligence technol-

ogy such as autonomous driving and more recently, generative AI to stay competitive. The company's Hong Kong-listed shares fell 1.7% Tuesday following the announcement.

Baidu introduced its Ernie Bot in March. In August, it made the model available to the public.

Ernie 4.0 is not yet available to the general public but some people have been invited to try it.

Li said Baidu plans to incorporate artificial intelligence technology into its search engine, maps and cloud drive services, and its business intelligence offerings for enterprise customers. He did not give a timetable for that. The technology can transform how certain products work. Baidu's search engine might generate a customized answer to a query instead of just providing a list of results and links.

China has recently sought to regulate the generative

AI industry, requiring companies to carry out security reviews and obtain approvals before publicly launching their products. Companies that provide such AI services must also comply with government requests for technology and data. The U.S. does not have such regulations. □

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Upcoming 'Sesame Street' season stars Ariana DeBose, Brandi Carlile, ASL and an octopus chef

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The upcoming season of "Sesame Street" features an octopus as a chef, an exploration of American Sign Language and Quinta Brunson giving Cookie Monster a little bit of attitude.

The 54th season of the iconic children's show debuts Nov. 9 on MAX with a gentle satire of Brunson's hit mockumentary "Abbott Elementary," mimicking that show's single-camera style and confessional cut-aways.

"It was really fun to kind of zoom in on Cookie Monster making a joke about eating a cookie and Quinta Brunson giving him a little bit of side-eye," says Executive Producer Sal Perez in an exclusive interview previewing the season.

Brunson came in with an advantage most celebrity guests don't have: In her early days in Los Angeles, she attended a puppet workshop created by Jim Henson, creator of The Muppets. "When a celebrity or a guest comes on set with that sort of knowledge and understanding, it just takes the content that we're doing that much further," says Perez. "We were lucky to have her."

Brunson joins other celebrities during the season



This image released by Sesame Workshop shows Ariana DeBose, right, with muppet characters, from left, Elmo, Cookie Monster and Abby Cadabby on the set of the children's show "Sesame Street."

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like Ariana DeBose, Brandi Carlile, Eugene Cordero, Dan Levy and Kal Penn, who booked his ticket after making a plea dressed as Cookie Monster on "Live with Kelly & Mark" to be on "Sesame Street."

Other highlights this season include an exploration of Bessie Coleman, the first woman of African American and Native American descent to earn her pilot's license in the U.S. And Elmo celebrates Alphabet Day by singing the ABC song while a deaf friend signs

the alphabet using American Sign Language.

Grover takes over Hooper's store and brings in his chef, who happens to be a muppet octopus. The only flaw is that the chef only makes bread — from pita to baguettes.

"So no matter what anybody orders in the restaurant, the only thing that the octopus can make is bread," he says. "It was a really, really unique way to show different cultural identities within food."

The season also includes a

segment called "Proud of My Name," where Rosita feels frustrated when her basketball coach shortens her name and Elmo and Gabrielle encourage her to speak up that she wants to be called "Rosita."

"Sesame Street," designed by education professionals and child psychologists, is shown in more than 150 countries, has won 193 Emmys, 10 Grammys and received a Kennedy Center Honor for lifetime artistic achievement, the first time a television program

got the award. In 2015, the longtime PBS show began a pact with HBO that gave the premium cable channel the right to air new episodes nine months before they air on PBS.

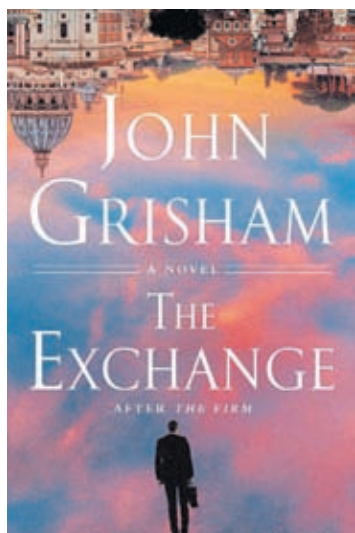
This season marks the second that Perez is executive producing the show and returns to last season's self-identity and belonging curriculum. He grew up watching "Sesame Street" and joined the Sesame Workshop in 2006. During this latest season's filming, he also welcomed a second child. His first, a daughter now 4, is, of course, a fan.

"I would be lying if I didn't say that there were a few episodes in the season that were inspired by some of the trials and tribulations of my then-2 or 3-year old as she was growing up," says Perez. Some of those include being scared by slides and the wonders of flamingos.

DeBose — the Broadway star and Oscar-winner for "West Side Story — kicks off the season singing the song "Friendship Feeling" with Elmo, Abby and Cookie Monster.

"It's really fun when you have someone like that who's so excited to be with us and able to sing along. Obviously having a wonderful voice does not hurt," says Perez. □

John Grisham brings back 'The Firm' star Mitch McDeere in 'The Exchange'



This cover image released by Doubleday shows "The Exchange" by John Grisham.

Associated Press

By **ROB MERRILL**
Associated Press

Thirty-two years after "The Firm" launched his career as a legal novelist who churns out bestselling books that almost invariably become movies, John Grisham returns with a sequel starring Mitch McDeere.

In "The Exchange," it's 2000 and McDeere is now a high-powered partner at the world's largest law firm, Scully & Pershing, having "established a reputation as a sort of legal SWAT team leader sent in by Scully to rescue clients in distress." He lives a very privileged life in

Manhattan with his wife and two young boys.

Grisham fans will love the first 37 pages, as McDeere travels back to Memphis for the first time since the events in "The Firm" and meets with an old friend. It's an excuse for Grisham to fill in the 15-year time gap since Mitch and his wife Abby fled Memphis on the run from the Chicago mob, who was hunting him for his role exposing crimes at Bendini, Lambert & Locke, but it's inconsequential to the new story Grisham has to tell.

That narrative kicks off when Mitch is called to Rome to

take the lead on a case involving a Turkish company that built a \$400 million bridge to nowhere in the Libyan desert that Colonel Gaddafi (yes, it's the year 2000 and the Libyan dictator is still alive) is now refusing to pay for. When Mitch assigns a London-based Scully associate to go on a fact-finding mission to the bridge, she is taken hostage and this legal thriller pretty much drops the adjective and just becomes a thriller. Mitch's job is not to legally outsmart his colleague's captors, but to try and make sure she's not beheaded by

terrorists by working every angle to come up with their ransom. The action skips from New York to Rome to London to Tripoli to Istanbul and it's very easy to imagine the establishing aerial shots in the movie version as the plot crosses continents.

Grisham fans will devour it; but there were times when this reader wished the action would slow down a little so we could spend some time with the characters. Mitch is always on the move — in a car, on a plane, in a boardroom — conversations are clipped, and the plot pace is furious. □



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There's a place for women to play golf with men, not against them

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP Golf Writer

Lexi Thompson missed the cut by three shots on the PGA Tour in Las Vegas, and expectations are only going to get bigger the next time she plays.

Not against the men, but on the LPGA Tour.

While she played remarkably well in the Shriners Children's Open — especially her 69 in the second round when she had social media buzzing about whether Thompson might make the cut — it raised one question about the state of her game. How can someone that talented go more than four years without winning on the LPGA Tour?

Perhaps her inspiring week in Las Vegas will provide the spark she needs. It was all the more amazing that Thompson could handle the spotlight and the TPC Summerlin course amid a season so difficult she might have only one tournament left.

Thompson is No. 87 in the CME Race to the Globe — she was outside the top 150 until a pair of top-10



Lexi Thompson follows through with her tee shot on the eighth hole during the first day of the Shriners Children's Open golf tournament, Thursday, Oct. 12, 2023, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

finishes after the Solheim Cup — and will need to finish fourth or better at The Annika tournament on Nov. 9-12 to qualify for the season-ending CME Group Tour Championship.

If she doesn't make it, that certainly won't take the shine off a year that will be remembered for her respectable showing in Las Vegas, where she drove the par-4 15th green and rolled in a pair of long birdie putts to temporarily get inside the cut line Friday morning.

The golf was good, and

her messaging was even better. Thompson spoke all week about the chance to inspire young children to chase any dream no matter the challenge or the doubters. Even through turmoil — and Thompson has endured plenty of that — her interaction with kids is a priority.

What also emerged from her short week in Las Vegas is the missed opportunity to get men and women together more often.

This is not about women playing against the men, but playing with them.

It's not about how many men Thompson beat over 36 holes. That's not how to keep score in golf, and it misses the point. It's also nothing new.

Michelle Wie, the closest any female player has come to making the cut on the PGA Tour since 1945, shot a 68 in the Sony Open when she was in the ninth grade. She missed the cut by one shot. Among the players who finished behind her was Adam Scott. A few weeks later, swing coach Butch Harmon taped a picture of Wie in Scott's locker. Golf is one of the few sports that allows for men and women playing together, and the PGA Tour is just now getting up to speed. The tour was trying to make the World Cup of Golf mixed teams until the COVID-19 pandemic halted those plans.

The focus shifted to what is now the Grant Thornton Invitational in December for PGA Tour and LPGA players (Thompson will be playing with Rickie Fowler). The event used to be known as the Shark Shootout, and

Thompson was among the few women who played in that version.

The Grant Thornton is the first mixed-team event on the PGA Tour since the old JC Penney Classic ended in 1999, the last edition won by John Daly and Laura Davies.

The Australian Open and Women's Australian Open now are held on the same course at the same time for equal prize money. In Europe, the Scandinavian Mixed in Sweden is sanctioned by the European tour, Ladies European Tour and LPGA. Men and women compete for one prize (the women play from a shorter set of tees). Linn Grant won last year, becoming the first female to win an official European tour event. Surely there is room for something similar on the PGA Tour.

There was chatter several years ago about combining the Tournament of Champions at Kapalua for winners from the PGA Tour and LPGA Tour. But then the LPGA found a sponsor for its own edition in Florida. □

Steph Curry to receive Charlie Sifford Award for advancing diversity in golf

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry has been selected to receive the Charlie Sifford Award for his work in advancing diversity in golf. Curry two years ago launched "Underrated Golf" that commits to providing equity, access and opportunity to high school athletes from all communities. He also funded the Howard University golf team for six years to help the historically Black school compete on the Di-

vision I level. Howard had not had a golf team since the 1970s.

Curry will receive the award at the World Golf Hall of Fame ceremony at Pinehurst, North Carolina, on June 10, the Monday before the U.S. Open.

Sifford was the first Black player to become a PGA Tour member in 1961. He was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2004. The Charlie Sifford Award was created in 2021 to honor an individual who

personifies Sifford's groundbreaking achievements through perseverance, confidence, respect, and adaptability. "I'm incredibly honored to be chosen as the recipient of this year's Charlie Sifford Award and am grateful to the World Golf Hall of Fame for the recognition in this sport that I am so passionate about," Curry said. "I believe that we have the opportunity to grow the game of golf by providing equity, access and opportunity to young



Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry cheers after a Warrior basket in the second half in a preseason NBA basketball game against the Sacramento Kings in Sacramento, Calif., Sunday, Oct. 15, 2023.

Associated Press

golfers who have that same passion, dedication and

determination as so many of us out on the green." □

Old but more than old-school, Dusty Baker and Bruce Bochy are shining as MLB's oldest managers

By KRISTIE RIEKEN

AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — When Texas rookie Evan Carter was born in 2002, Houston Astros manager Dusty Baker had been managing in the big leagues for a decade and Rangers skipper Bruce Bochy was in his eighth season.

The ages of MLB managers have been declining in the last few years, with 22 under 60 at the start of the 2023 season. But in the AL Championship Series, the two oldest managers in the majors, 74-year-old Baker and 68-year-old Bochy, are leading the way.

"I can brag, because I've made it this far in age," Baker said. "(And) it has something to do with us, but mostly to do with your team. And the fact that the team trusts us."

"I didn't look at it as a competition as far as old versus young, to be honest," said Bochy, whose team leads 2-0 heading into Game 3 on Wednesday.

After Baker was fired by the Nationals following a 97-win season in 2017, he wondered if he'd ever get another shot. He thought his age — and salary demands commensurate with his experience — was keeping teams away.

"I've said in the past, you look around the world, there's different kinds of discrimination. There's age, race and there's sometimes gender. And sometimes intellectual," he said. "So, there's all kind of things that you can think about. But it's no good to worry about."

Bochy believes what Baker and some other older managers — including 2021 World Series winner Brian Snitker in Atlanta — have done in recent years might have helped with his return to the dugout after a three-year absence.

"I guess it's good for the old guys that we're in this situation," Bochy said. "But that might be why I got a call, I don't know, because of the success of some veteran managers."

Houston owner Jim Crane



Houston Astros manager Dusty Baker shakes hands with Texas Rangers manager Bruce Bochy before Game 1 of the baseball AL Championship Series Sunday, Oct. 15, 2023, in Houston.

Associated Press

wasn't turned off by the fact Baker was 71 when he interviewed to manage the team after A.J. Hinch was fired in the wake of the team's sign-stealing scandal in 2020. In fact, he believed his reputation and decades in the game were just what the Astros needed to help repair their tattered reputation.

"His experience and the experience of dealing with pressure and players and a lot of different situations — that was very appealing," Crane said. "He's a smart guy. Once you visited with him a couple of times, you realized how bright he was, how well he knew the game. And he embraces the analytics, but he also goes old-school. So you've got a good blend."

Rangers GM Chris Young said people asked him about hiring an "old-school manager" when he brought Bochy to Texas this offseason. He pushed back on the assertion that Bochy was old-school simply be-

cause he was old.

"I feel the exact opposite," he said. "I think that if you're stuck in your ways, you don't last. And these old managers who have lasted last because they evolve and they're open-minded and they grow. I think that's an important attribute to recognize with Bochy. He's been wonderful. I absolutely love working with him."

Crane, who is a year older than Bochy, enjoys seeing the "old guys" shine this postseason.

"I think it's great," he said. "It may have flipped a little bit too far the other way, and now it's kind of back in the middle and I think that's where it's best for baseball." Houston outfielder Mauricio Dubón might be the biggest fan of this matchup of anyone on either roster after playing for both managers. He played 28 games for Bochy as a rookie in San Francisco in 2019 and has played for Baker since joining the Astros last season.

"It's pretty unreal and no

wonder why they're having the success they're having — I think Bochy's a big part of what's going on over there," Dubón said. "He treats the players how they should be treated. Dusty does the same thing. So, it's heaven, in a sense as a player, just because they treat the players the right way."

The 29-year-old Dubón said playing for Bochy and Baker is like being around a grandfather.

"He'll pull your ears and ground you," Dubón joked. "But he does it because he cares about you and he wants you to be good."

And Dubón can't get enough of the old-school tales from the two.

"They know stories that sometimes you're like: 'You were managing that long?' And it's pretty crazy hearing them," he said.

At 40, Houston ace Justin Verlander was among the oldest players in the league this season. He thinks he and the old managers

have many things in common.

"It's kind of like older pitchers, you know, there's instincts, they're there for a reason," he said. "And you can trust your gut. And I think a lot of times it works out."

After a 19-year playing career, Baker has managed 4,046 regular-season games over 26 seasons with the Giants, Cubs, Reds, Nationals and Astros. Bochy, who played for nine seasons, also has managed 26 seasons, with 4,194 games with the Padres, Giants and Rangers.

Baker is the winningest active manager with 2,183 victories and Bochy ranks second with 2,093. But Bochy has more rings — he won the World Series three times with the Giants, while Baker took home his first title last season.

At 75, Arizona pitching coach Brent Strom is one of the oldest on-field staffers in the majors. He had the same job with the Astros from 2014-2021, working for Baker for the last two seasons.

He's thrilled to see two fellow senior citizens excelling. "The players today, even though they're besieged by analytics, (Baker and Bochy) have a bunker mentality of 'been there, done that,'" Strom said. "And both of those guys have been through the wars. They've been to the top of the mountain. They've had some lows, too, but I think the players really appreciate a guy who has some battle scars. Both those guys have them and wear them with pride."

Bochy isn't concerned about whether his players think of him as a father or grandfather figure. He's only worried about one thing.

"Hopefully they know that I care about them, and we all want the same thing, and that's to win ballgames," he said. "Hopefully I can help put them in that situation. That's my job. If they understand that, then I'm good with it." □